[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

ED276277

Adoption of Loanwords in Arabic: A Sociolinguistic Need

Sami Alrabaa

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Florian Coulmas

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

short title: Loanwords in Arabic

FL016243

Adoption of loan-words is a process calling for a thoughtful combination of adherence to linguistic principles and awareness of the functional-practical issues involved. The case of Kuwaiti linguistic adoption of loan-terminology currently used in Kuwait may serve as an example of the different dimensions of sociolinguitic variation in this area.

Adoption of terminology is furthermore an inherently complex activity, especially in diglossic societies. Kuwait is a case in point, as a part of the Arabic-speaking world living under diglossic conditions. There have been some Arab efforts initiated by some Arab Language Academies in the past aimed at standardizing loan terminologies of certain technical fields; however, coordinated work along modern lines is only starting. In linguistics, the frequently unsystematic and occasionally quite haphazard use of terms has caused dissatisfaction. The lingusits themselves are likely to find this state of affairs irritating rather than really confusing, but communication with specialists in other disciplines and with the general public can be seriously impaired as a result.

This paper focuses on usage of loan-words within written Arabic in Kuwait. It sould be borne in mind, however, that similar - and in some cases perhaps even greater - problems exist in the establishment and use of linguistic terminology in Egypt and Morocco also, as well as in Syria and Saudi Arabia (as parts of Arabic diglossia). The purpose of the paper is to identify and briefly discuss the main dimensions of loan terminological adoption of broadly sociolinguistic nature, with selected examples from daily newspapers.

One important dimension of loan-words adoption is the sociocultural tradition of a specific region, including historically derived attitudes in matter of usage. The most far-reaching single issue here is that of purism vs. internationalism. Due to differences in histirical and cultural development, a given region may on the whole display marked purist tendencies, while another may be less /re /sistant to the internationalization of terminology.

This article is an attempt to investigate the sociolinguistic aspects of this internationalzation and increasing use of foreign words in Arabic through a study of the modern European words in two Kuwaiti nespapers, Al-Anbā' and Al-Siyāsa. (The data were collected from these two dailies between 1.1 - 13.12.1984).

Newspapers have been chosen because, more than any other form of writing, they draw their vocabulary from the mainstream of language and not from the tributaries formed by technical and specialized terms.

It will be noticed that this study covers only the written language, not the spoken colloquial, the low variety. No similar work has, to my knowledge, been done on the latter. However, it would be generally agreed upon that the proportion of foreign words in the low variety is certainly larger than in written Arabic, the high Arabic. The extent of the difference may be judged by listening to a play using the low variety.

Table I gives a listing of modern European words used by the newspapers. It excludes Greek and Latin words which entered the Arabic language in the Middle Ages as well as Persian and Turkish words which came in then or later. It also excludes geographical names, but includes the names of the months of the calendar (January, etc.) which have become universal in Kuwait though not in the other Arab countries where the traditional Semitic names (Kanūn Al-thāni, etc.) are still used.

Table I

Food and drink

batatah (It. patata, 'potatoe')
bīrah (It. birra, 'beer')
sandwitsh (Eng. sandwich)
sigarah (cigarette)
shambānia (It. sciampania, 'champagne')
shakalāta (It. ciocolata, 'chocolate')
salsah (It. salsa, 'sauce')
sōda (Eng. soda)
tamata (tomato)
faraula (It. fragola, 'strawberry')
Koniāk (Fr. cognac)
mortadella (It. mortadella, 'ham sausage')
ma'karōna (It. maccherone, 'macaroni')
wiski (Eng. whisky)
baskōt (bescuit)
tost (toast)

Clothing and Cosmetics

bantalōn (It. pantaloni, 'pants')
būdrah (Fr. poudre, 'powder')
jakēt (It. giachetta, 'jacket')
rōb (Fr. robe, 'dressing gown')
fanillah (It. flanella, 'undershirt')
kolōnia (Fr. eau de cologne)
manakīr (Fr. mancure)

Household

bitrōl (Eng. petrol, benzine)
battariyyiah (It. batteria, 'battery')
bufēh (Fr. buffet)
tirmos (thermos)
tirmomiter (Fr. thermomètre)
dūsh (Fr. douche, shower)
sālah (It. sala, 'living room')
barandah (It. veranda)
vella (villa)
shalēh (Fr. Shalét)
kanabayiah (Fr. canapé, sofa)
klub (Eng. club)

Transport and Communications

asfalt (asphalt)
taksi (taxicab)
telifōn (telephone)
radio (radio)
faramel (brakes)
lory (Eng. lorry)
lese (Fr. license)
stop (Eng. stop-lights)
motōr (motor, engine)
bisklēt (bicycle)
mikanīki (mechanic)

Music and Entertainment

orkestrah (orchestra)
bār (Eng. bar)
sirk (Fr. cirque, 'circus')
sīnama (cinema)
tāulah (It. tavola, 'table')
disk (record)
diskotēk (discoteque)
flāsh (Eng. flash light)
cafteria (cafeteria)

Abstract and Technical Terms

sociolōgi (sociological)
aristoqrātiyya (aristocracy)
barlamān (Fr. parlement)
burjuaziyyia (Fr. bourgeois)
fashistiya (faschism)
marksiya (marxism)
naziyyia (nazism)
diktatōriya (dictatorship)
bōrsa (It. borsa ,'stock exchange')
diblomāsiya (diplomacy)
dimoqrātiyia (democracy)
rutīn (Fr. routine)
sikritēra (secretary)
bragmatiki (pragmatic)
drāma (drama)
komīdi (comedian)
romantīqi (romantic)
riwāya bolosiya (Fr. roman policier)
klasīki (classical)
mitafisiqi (metaphysical)
narfaza (nervousness)
mūdah (It. moda, vogue, fashion)

Education

bakalōriyah (Fr. baccalauréat)
diblōm (Fr. diplom, higher degree)
lisans (Fr. licence, B.A.)
magistēr (M.A.)
doktorāh (doctorate)

Diseases, Drugs and Natural Sciences

influanza (influenza)
tifod (typhoid)
rumatizm (rheumatism)
kolera (cholera)
malārai (malaria)
mikrōb (microbe)
biologia (biology)
doktōr (doctor)
sikologia(psychology)
ghāsi (gaseous)
mitr (meter)
kīlo (kilo)

Others

garsōn (Fr. garçon ,'waiter')
brōfa (It. prova, rehearsal)
blatīn (platinium)
bomba (bomb)
rijīm (Fr. régime)
qirsh (Ger. groschen (a coin))
kapten (Eng. captain of team, leader)
sūrah karikatoriyah (Fr. caricature)
karnafāl (carnival)
makīnah (machine)
munāwarah (manoeuvre)
madām (Fr. madame, Mrs.)
nimrah (number)
kartōna (cartoon box)
glās (glass)
nōta (note
combūter (computer)

The first striking fact in the table is that the newspapers often use loan-words (instead of their equivalents in Arabic) in order to emphasize the fact that they are describing something European, e. g. Madam instead of Sayyida and Villa instead of Dar etc.

The second striking fact is brought out by the rather arbitrary division into 'objects of daily use' and 'abstract and technical terms'. Both the number and the frequency of the first group are much more than those of the latter. In other words, the papers' main need was for the names of things rather than for more abstract terms conveying ideas or states of mind. For the latter the dailies judged the resources of Arabic to be adequate. Yet, in sociological topics, the papers use more abstract terms such as pragmatism, classical, bourgeois, etc. to reflect the objects of their thoughts.

This increased use of foreign words is deliberate; some writers use them because they have been exposed to European literature and feel that the Arabic equivalents are not so expressive; other writers use these terms because they are in vogue and indicate a high degree of education.

Lastly, a few words may be said regarding the national origins of the loan-words. The predominance of Italian words, followed by French, in 'articles of daily use' is very marked. English ranks surprisingly a very poor third and no other language has made any significant contribution. It is much more difficult to trace the origin of 'abstract and technical terms', but the form they take suggests that most of them entered through Egyptian, and a few through English. The Egyptain influence is striking, for over 45% of the foreign man-power in Kuwait comes from Egypt. Furthermore, the Kuwaiti mass media employ many Egyptians. The absence of German words (except for Groschen and Nazism) is also striking.

Closer inspection of the sub-groups brings out further interesting facts. The words in the 'food and drink' category apply to articles introduced during the last thirty years, or in two or three cases somewhat earlier. The words under 'clothing and cosmetics' show increasing Europeanization of dress (particularly of female dress), the words under 'household' show a similar invasion of furniture and fittings. The words under 'music and entertainment' refer either to Western musical instruments and forms, such as piano, photographing (however, an Arabic word is mostly used for discs, Istuwanat) discoteque, circus and orchestra, or to various entertainment activities, e.g. cafeteria, cinema, club, etc.

The number of loan-words dealing with 'transport and communications' is relatively high and reflects most conspicuously the influence of the West on the Kuwaiti society. But it should be noted that there are loan-words which alternate with their Arabic equivalents when they are used. Thus, Darrajah alternates with Biskilēt (bicycle), Qitār alternates with Trēn (train), Barid (itself of Latin origin) alternates with Būsta (post) and so on. Telefon has proved more stubborn and refused to give way to the suggested substitute, Hatif. Attempts to find an Arabic word for television have so far failed, and Radio has held its own against Mithiya', though the word Lāsilki (wireless) is also commonly used.

The sub-group on 'education' shows the influence of French methods (again introduced into Kuwait by Egyptians, for most teachers in this country stem from Egypt or acquired their education there) and curricula, and the names of the various certificates have remained French. The sub-group of natural sceince -terms cannot be surprising if we take into account that natural science is the field where Arabic can least dispense with foreign loan-words.

The nature, and relatively small number, of the words shown under 'social sciences' point out the success of Arabic in coining words in the vast field designated by this heading. It should be noted that they include some items which could have been omitted, e.g. Fascism, Nazism and Marxism, which are proper nouns, and aristocracy and democracy, which were known to the medieval Arabs, but were later forgotten and had to be re-introduced, directly or through Turkish, in the 19th century. Similarly, Barlaman (Parliament) is a proper noun like Congress, with Arabic terms for its constituent Chamber of Deputies (Majlis al-nuwāb) and Senate (Majlis al-shiyūkh). Bourgeoisie has acquired a connotation which makes it untranslatable into Arabic, as into other languages.

The most striking aspect of this sub-group is, however, the words which are not there. Thanks to the efforts of Turkish and Arabic translators and thinkers of the 19th century, Arabic equivalents were coined for some of the basic terms of European political, economic and sociological thought. This process has continued without interruption and excellent Arabic words are available for such concepts as capitalism, socialism, communism, anarchism, individualism; conservative, liberal, progressive, reactionary, session, committee, sub-committee, bill, law, decree, executive, legislative, and hundreds of other terms. Even in economics, native resources have met a large part of the need for new terminology.

The other set of words which are conspicuous by their absence is what may be termed 'psychological', that is, words used to indicate emotions, states of mind, motivations, etc. In this field the Arabic language offers large resources, and journalists in particular use them extensively.

The relatively big number of loan-words used by the dailies under study confirm the impression that journalists -perhaps because they are in more of a hurry and therefore somewhat less careful of their style, or perhaps because they are closer to the colloquial - tend to use European words more frequently than writers of books. And these words are widely accepted particularly in Kuwait, a country which has been open to the West since discovering oil in it more than thirty years ago. And due to the fact that newspapers are more read in Kuwait than books, one can predict with a fair degree of confidence that Arabic will continue to make very extensive use of foreign loan-words.

It may be noted, furthermore, that some two-thirds of those loan-words will be more 'objects of daily use', the others will be consisting mainly of administrative, commerial and political terms.

The above tentative conclusion is quite related to the traditional Arabic approach towards foreign words. As far as possible the Arabs have tried to find Arabic equivalents for foreign terms, either by giving old words new meanings or by putting together two or more words to form a new compo e.g. Wujhat Nazar (points of view), etc. This procedure has given fairly satisfactory results in the vocabulary of everyday life. It has also made it possible to find Arabic equivalents for most of the terms used in the social sciences, and almost all of those employed in literature . But although intense - and in this author's opinion generally misguided - efforts have been made to replace European scientific and technical terms by Arabic equivalents, it is clear that neither Arabic nor any other language can avoid a massive influx of such terms. The international scientific and technical civilization which is sweeping over, and unifying, the world carries with it, perforce, its own terminology.

Fischer, J.L. (1958). Social influences on the choice of a linguistic variant. Word 14, 47-56.

Garvin, P. (1959). The standard language problem: Concepts and methods. Anthropological Linguistics 1 (2), 28-31.

Passin, H. (1963). Writer and journalist in the transitional society. In Lucien W. Pye (ed.), Communications and Political Development. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 83-123.

Ray, P.S. (1963). Language standardization: Studies in perspective linguistics. The Hague: Mouton.

Riggs, F.W. (1980). Special languages and terminology. Sociolinguistics Newsletter XI (2): 18-22.

Sager, J.C. & Johnson, R.L. (1978). Terminology: The state of the art. AILA Bulletin 22: 1-11.

Turner, R. (1970). Words, utterances and activities. In J. Douglas (ed.), Understanding Everyday Life. New York: Aldine.